



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
LANSING




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GOVERNOR

MICHAEL P. FLANAGAN  
SUPERINTENDENT OF  
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

April 24, 2006

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** State Board of Education

**FROM:** Michael Flanagan, Chairman 

**SUBJECT:** Approval of State Board of Education Recommendation that Local Boards of Education Adopt a Policy for End of Route Student Checks

Leaving even one child unattended on a bus is a serious concern for Michigan families and schools. The possibility of leaving a child on the bus after a completed bus route is not acceptable and has potentially serious safety ramifications. In February 2006, a Michigan public school reported that a special needs student had been left on a bus for seven hours. In the first week of March 2006, there was national press coverage of two incidents where students were left unattended on school buses in Iowa and Florida. This is a preventable problem that can be addressed with an effective policy that requires drivers to check their bus before they exit it at the end of their route. Most districts have procedures for the drivers to check the bus at the end of a route, but not all districts have a board policy to reinforce the importance of end of route checks.

Credit for requesting this action of the State Board of Education is given to the Pupil Transportation Advisory Committee (PTAC). PTAC was formed to advise the Department of Education on pupil transportation issues and topics concerning school buses and school bus safety, as outlined in Section 70 of Public Act 187, as amended, of 1990. PTAC is made up of representatives of the Michigan Departments of State Police, Secretary of State, Transportation, and Education (MDE), along with representatives of the major education organizations in the state. Some of those groups include the Michigan Association of School Administrators, the Michigan Education Association, the Michigan Association of School Boards, and the Michigan Association of Nonpublic Schools. In its advisory role, PTAC develops positions on proposed rules, regulations, and/or legislation regarding pupil transportation and on other issues related to pupil transportation for consideration by the MDE. PTAC's recommendation regarding end of route student checks was that the State Board of Education mandate districts to adopt a policy regarding such checks. PTAC members felt strongly that the problem with students being inadvertently left on buses would not exist if every transportation provider faithfully implemented a district procedure. Since the State Board is not able to

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mandate such an action, the State Board is asked to encourage all providers of student transportation to adopt such a policy.

It is recommended that the State Board of Education encourage all districts to adopt a policy that defines the responsibilities for all school transportation providers that ensures no students are left on school buses.

## State Board of Education End of Route Student Check Recommendation

It is recognized that a variety of processes and procedures for End of Route Student Checks exist, such as "empty" signs in the back of the bus following the route, electronic monitoring devices, supervisor verification, and duplicate systems that reduce the instances of these undesirable events. However, bus drivers and their supervisors need to have a redundant accountability system. A fail-safe methodology, with board policy tailored to the district, will increase safe pupil transportation.

The State Board of Education recommends that all school transportation providers and school boards implement a written policy that requires a system for ensuring that, after completion of each bus route, children are not left on the bus. Further, the policy must include, at a minimum, the methodology for ensuring no student is left on the bus and a process for verifying and ensuring compliance.

Guidance to develop a policy may be found through pupil transportation agencies such as the Michigan Association for Pupil Transportation (<http://www.mapt.org/>); the National Association for Pupil Transportation (<http://www.napt.org/>); or the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services ([www.nasdpts.org](http://www.nasdpts.org)). Other examples of implementation procedures are available on the Michigan Department of Education's website (<http://www.michigan.gov/schoolbus>).